The

Non-Subscribing Presbyterian.

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Notes of the Month.

AN event which occurred at the end of last month was doubtless of interest to many of our readers. We refer to the centennial of the birth of Mrs. Gaskell, one of the most eminent novelists of the nineteenth century. The *Bookman* made its September issue a special Mrs. Gaskell number and contained very interesting estimates of her place in English literature. One writer considers that no great novelist surpassed her within the limits of the modern novel. His actual words are noteworthy: "So far as artistic perfection is attainable in such a formless and chaotic thing as the modern novel, it is my deliberate belief that Mrs. Gaskell has no absolute rival in the measure of complete success which she was enabled to achieve." If other critics scarcely go so far in their eulogies of her artistic power the general estimate leaves no doubt as to the belief in the enduring charm of her works. As regards the matter, no writer has exercised a more wholesome and ennobling influence. Who can recall hours devoted to books like "Cranford," or "Mary Barton," without feelings of pure and unalloyed delight? No wonder that the popular demand for such works is still great. If the celebration of her centenary has gained her books new readers, or induced old ones to re-read their favourites, in either case the effect cannot be otherwise than good. If amongst both classes are members of our own community their pleasure will perhaps be accentuated by the pride of possession, since Mrs. Gaskell was ever a most devoted Unitarian. It is this fact which gives us a special interest in the event mentioned above. Both by her connections as well as by her convictions, Mrs. Gaskell belonged to our household of faith. For many years her husband, the Rev. Wm. Gaskell, was the devoted and greatly loved minister of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, and one of the founders of the Unitarian Home Missionary College. Their home in Plymouth Grove was a centre of culture; their home life one of the greatest beauty and charm. Among their visitors were well-known writers like Thomas Carlyle and Charlotte Bronte; world-famous musicians like Madame Goldschmidt (Jenny Lind); talented ladies like Catherine and Susan-

nah Winckworth. But if their abode was well known as a centre of culture it was equally famous for its philanthropic activities, and its fame increased rather than diminished in later years, owing to the open-handed generosity of the Misses Gaskell. So much of good was crowded into Mrs. Gaskell's life that it is difficult to realise that she died so long ago as the year 1865, that is, almost twenty years before her husband ceased from his devoted labours as a true minister of Christ. Since then how many thousands have made pilgrimage to their quiet resting place in the graveyard of the old and beautiful Unitarian Chapel, Knutsford? With the passage of time many memorials have been put up to her memory, but the best, the most precious, the one most likely to endure, is to be found in her charming works.

* * *

An indication of the growing tendency of ministers of different denominations to co-operate for a common purpose was forthcoming in Belfast two or three weeks ago. The Congregational Church in Donegall Street arranged for a Welcome Meeting on the occasion of the settlement of the Rev. T. S. Taylor, B.A., and sent out invitations to the ministers of other churches to attend and address the meeting. Among such invitations was one to the Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., he being asked to represent the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. We are glad that he was able to attend and speak from the same platform as representatives of the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian, the Baptist, Methodist, and Congregational bodies. The more frequently such opportunities arise and are utilised the more likely is a true Christian re-union to become a fact and mutual understanding to be promoted.

* * *

We have received an interesting article from Rev. James Kennedy on the Dissenters' Chapels Bill, 1844, but owing to pressure of our space cannot include it in this month's issue. We hope to publish it in November.

THE DECLINE IN THE ATTENDANCE UPON PUBLIC WORSHIP. WHY?

DO absentees from public worship ever ask themselves if they would like to see all other people do as they do in this matter? If so, they are doing their best (or worst) to bring about a great social misfortune; and if not, are they not strangely inconsistent in doing what they would not wish others to do?

From some cause or causes there has been for a generation or more, but especially of late, an unfortunate decline in the attendance upon the public services of religion, not in connection with one denomination only, but in connection with most. Denominational records for last year tell a doleful tale. While the population of the British Isles is increasing, the attendance at places of worship is decreasing. In some instances last year, denominational membership decreased by hundreds, in others by several thousands, and in one case, by upwards of twenty thousand! This shows that the spiritual force, the moral suggestion, the inspiration derivable from religious services were lost to those who should have been present, and, therefore, the quality of their life remained unimproved. Without the spiritual stimulus referred to, passion, appetite, self-interest and ease, could more effectively make their appeals, for attendance upon public worship, I verily believe, saves many from moral and spiritual shipwreck.

Forty years ago and more, neglect of public worship on the part of the working classes caused heart-searchings among many leaders of public opinion. Some determined, if possible, to discover the reason of it, and after duly considering the matter, resolved to hold a conference in London for the discussion of the subject, many working-class representatives being specially invited to be present and lay their views before the meeting. Representatives of those warmly attached to religion and religious institutions, were also present, and all speakers were urged to be sincere in their

utterances, and " call a spade a spade." Among those present were Thomas Hughes, and George Potter, M.P.'s, Revs. F. D. Maurice, Thomas Binney, Newman Hall, Robert Spears, and Dean Stanley. Among the causes alleged in the *Report of the Conference* for the alienation of the working classes (it affects all classes now), the following were advanced :—The pew system, which introduces social distinctions into the Church ; a paid ministry ; overwork ; want of interest on the part of ministers in public questions ; the preaching of an adulterated Christianity; the inculcation of reverence for books, places, seasons, ceremonies, rather than reverence for truth and duty ; the unfriendly attitude of ministers towards the temperance question ; the ignoring of science in connection with religion ; too many sects and parties ; the use of religion as a cloak for the practice of hypocrisy ; the want of better clothes ; the drinking habits of the working-classes ; real want of interest in religion; preference for the study of nature ; gloomy preaching ; the charging of man with being naturally depraved ; the preaching of the doctrine of eternal punishment ; the passion for gambling ; the love of Sunday pleasures ; because the printing press renders preaching unnecessary ; doctrinal differences among the denominations ; the fear of being " chaffed " by fellow-workmen ; the absence of outspokenness in the pulpit ; inconsistency in religious employers ; want of ability in ministers.

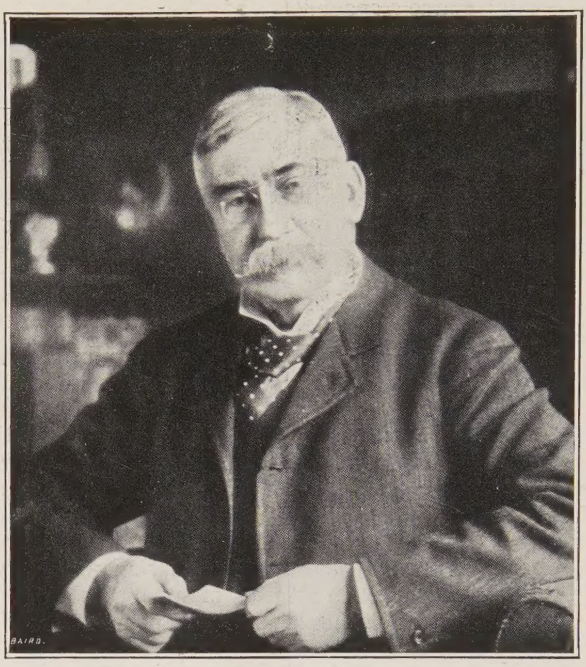
While many of the reasons adduced were appropriate and pertinent enough, by far the greater proportion seem to me to have been weak, inadequate, short-sighted, untrue, and some even nonsensical. Many Unitarian ministers, for instance, in England, engage largely in public matters, but I doubt if a solitary individual is attracted to their services as a consequence. I have known ministers to injure their influence with their congregations by dabbling in politics. I once heard a well-known minister who engaged in public affairs mainly of a social character, disdainfully refer to the ingratitude of the working classes towards those who tried to serve them. Not an outsider ever attended his services as a consequence of his social activities. This gentleman was a poet, and had chronicled events in connection with the French Revolution of 1848, for an English Liberal publication. It may be appropriate to ask if these things, and especially party politics, pertain to the proper work of the ministry ? But to discuss very briefly each point raised at the Conference would require a whole number.

I believe it is impossible to point to any single cause of the decline in religious observance. Rather, I believe there are many, chief among which are the absence of vital interest in religion and all that pertains to it, and an all-absorbing interest in sport and sensational amusements. These latter features of modern society are assuming a master influence in the life of the people, and are depriving them of earnestness of purpose, seriousness of spirit, good resolution, devotion to duty, without which religion must languish and die.—W.S.S.

DEATH OF DR. JOSEPH NELSON.

IT is with sincere regret we announce the death of Dr. Joseph Nelson, which took place on 31st August. By his death Belfast loses not only one of her most brilliant surgeons, an oculist with a European reputation, but one of her most picturesque and attractive personalities.

Born some seventy years ago at Downpatrick, Dr. Nelson was of notable descent. Out of nine preceding generations eight of his forefathers were clergymen and one a captain in the army. The first of these, John Knox, the Scottish Reformer, married Margaret Stewart of the blood royal, and their third daughter, Elizabeth Knox, married John Welch of Ayr who was banished the realm for attending the prohibited assembly at Aberdeen in 1605. Josias Welch, son of John Welch, and grandson of John Knox, was installed by Captain Norton as first Presbyterian minister in our congregation at Templepatrick in the year 1622 or thereabouts. The eldest son of Josias resumed the family name of John and became in every way a more remarkable man than his father. He was deprived of his living in 1662 for not having been duly presented and instituted by the Bishop, and there-



DR. JOSEPH NELSON.

upon he took to field preaching throughout the South of Scotland and across the border. Such action was of course contrary to the government, and he was outlawed, a reward of £500 being offered for his apprehension. He escaped to London and died there in 1681 and "his funeral is said to have been the most numerous that had ever been seen in London." GeorgeWelch, son of the famous field preacher, became a Captain in the army, but his son, the Rev. Andrew Welch, of Ardstraw, entered the clerical profession and thus resumed again the family tradition. At this point the name of Welch drops out of our story and that of Nelson comes in. The last Welch we have heard of was the clever and distinguished Jane Baillie Welsh, wife of Thomas Carlyle, and she claimed her descent from John Knox. The eldest daughter of the Rev. Andrew Welch married the Rev. Moses Nelson, D.D., of Rademon, who was noted as a wit, and as a profound scholar and successful teacher. Their son, the Rev. Dr. James Nelson made his mark as an educationalist in Downpatrick; and his son, the Rev. Samuel Craig Nelson, father of Dr. Nelson, is still remembered as minister of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church in Downpatrick. Dr. Nelson received his early education in his native town, afterwards entering the Royal Academical Institution, Belfast. From the Institution he entered in due course the Queen's College as a medical student of the old Queen's University.

For two years he pursued the ordinary routine of studies; then came the decision that changed his whole career.

Young Nelson was one of those who came under the magic spell of Garibaldi, and he flung off cap and gown and slipped away to Genoa on receipt of the news that Garibaldi had left his island home at Caprera, and was meditating an attempt to break the power of King Bomba in the two Sicilies.

It was no holiday excursion. Garibaldi could rely on no backing. In the event of defeat his men could expect no terms save a short shrift and a long rope or lingering death in Neapolitan prisons, and defeat, to those who held by the saying God is on the side of big battalions, looked a foregone conclusion when a thousand volunteers, untrained, shockingly armed, without money or supplies, set out on a third-rate steamer to tackle 30,000 regular troops backed by a fleet of warships. The history of the nineteenth century contains the record of no wilder enterprise or none that sounds such an epical note. Napoleon is credited with being the author of "God is on the side of big battalions," but he was also the man who announced that "in war the moral is to the physical as three to one," a saying more to Garibaldi's mind, though he vastly preferred Danton's motto "L'audace et encore l'audace et toujours l'audace."

After a week at sea Garibaldi and his "Redshirts" steamed on the 11th May, 1860, into Marsala, capturing the town by a characteristically bold descent, and giving the Neapoli-

tan soldiers a first taste of their quality. From Marsala the force marched swiftly along mountain roads to Palermo. At Catalafimi King Bomba's troops had mustered to oppose the advance, and, though they outnumbered the " Redshirts " fifteen to one, officers and men had little heart for the encounter with the man who had held the battered walls of Rome against the onset of the French. On paper there should have been no doubt about the result. Garibaldi's " Thousand " were a mob of students, poets, journalists, and artisans armed with rusty rifles and old-fashioned bayonets, with scarcely a boot to their feet, and a good proportion of them smelt powder for the first time when they mustered on the pier at Marsala. In the fight there was but little attempt at elaborate tactics. The battle raged along a series of ridges, the Thousand flinging themselves like tigers on the foe. It was one of the hottest days of the hot Sicilian summer ; men fell from sunstroke as they pushed forward to the assault; but the Legion were not to be denied. Three times they were beaten back from the last hill, mowed down in swathes by artillery and musketry ; then by a supreme effort they hurled themselves over the ridge with levelled bayonets, and Bomba's troops broke and fled. Twelve days afterwards Garibaldi marched into Palermo, thrusting a hand into a hornet's nest with a vengeance, for even with the Sicilian recruits who came flocking to his standard he was still outnumbered six or seven to one. The street fighting that followed was the grimmest of the campaign, but again audacity conquered, the Neapolitans, beaten at every point, evacuated the town, and at Malazzo were finally crushed into fragments. On August 22 the Redshirts crossed the Straits of Messina, and, marching in triumphal progress through Calabria, entered Naples, from which King Francis II. had fled. Here after the battle of Volturno they were joined by Victor Emmanuel, whom Garibaldi hailed as the King of Italy at Caianello, and the great adventure came to an end.

Dr. Nelson took part in all the battles of the wonderful campaign, escaping without a scratch, and gaining his spurs in the shape of a commission in the " Regimento Inglese," commanded by Colonel Dunne, and officered by English, Scotch, and Irish, though the rank and file were Sicilian volunteers, principally inhabitants of Palermo. There has been a tendency to confuse this corps with the British Legion, but the latter as a matter of fact took no part in the Sicilian campaign, arriving at Naples in the autumn of 1860 when the worst of the fighting was over. After Volturno Nelson left the Thousand, returning home to exchange the din of the battle-field for the drone of the lecture-room. Nor did his strange experiences interfere with his grip of college and hospital work, for in three years he gained his medical degree in the Queen's University as well as the qualification of the Royal College of Surgeons.

He set out for India as surgeon on a tea plantation Here with doctoring he was lucky enough to mix a little fighting, taking part in an expedition against the Munipuris, receiving for his services a war medal, though it was more easily gained than the two presented to him in later years by the King of Italy. Later he became himself a tea planter, acquiring several valuable estates, returning to Ireland in 1877. In India he had studied diseases of the eye, and he continued to specialise in this subject in Dublin, devoting himself at the same time to obtaining a knowledge of German. Thus equipped he proceeded to Vienna, where he took out classes in eye, ear, and throat diseases, and had the honour of acting as assistant to Professor Arlt and Professor Fuchs, the last mentioned of whom was his guest on his visit to Belfast for the meeting of the British Medical Association last year.

Dr. Nelson rapidly built up a big reputation on his return from Vienna, and his fame as an oculist spread far beyond the borders of this city. His services were readily given to all in need of them, and he did splendid work as ophthalmic surgeon at the old Royal Hospital, the Royal Victoria Hospital, and the Queen Street Children's Hospital. When a few years back he resigned these appointments he was presented with a splendid service of plate in recognition of devoted labours, and the Board of Management of the Royal Victoria Hospital caused a special resolution of thanks to be entered on their minutes.

Though absorbed in his profession he did not allow it to narrow his activities. He was a wide reader, a brilliant conversationalist, and his pithy comments on men and affairs were always stimulating and suggestive. The passionate enthusiasm for Italy persisted to the end. Whenever he could manage it he revisited Sicily, making a pilgrimage over the old battle-fields, and tracing again the line of the marches from Marsala to Naples. It was only rarely he could be got to speak of his adventures, for with him modesty was so pronounced as to be a fault. On occasion, however, he indulged in reminiscences, and his vivid narratives made one regret that he never committed his record of the expedition to paper.

The late Dr. Nelson filled many posts of honour in connection with his profession. He was president of the Ulster Medical Society, and acted as secretary to the Ophthalmic Section of the British Association during its visit to Belfast in 1884, and it is safe to say that no man enjoyed more the esteem and affection of his colleagues. He was a member of All Souls' Congregation, in the affairs of which he took the deepest interest. He was twice married, his first wife being a Miss Michael, who left two children, Mr. Samuel Craig Nelson, who is now an engineer in India, and a daughter, who married the late Mr. J. T. Kamcke. His second wife, who survives him, was a daughter of Rev. Canon Lewis, of Ford

Rectory, Shrewsbury, by whom he had three children—two daughters and a son. With his widow and family, and also with his brothers, the deepest sympathy will be felt in their sad bereavement.

MONEYREA ORDINATION.

THE members of the Bangor Presbytery met on 6th September in the Moneyrea Church for the ordination to the pastoral oversight of the congregation of the Rev. Matthew Watkins, assistant for two years to Rev. J. Collins Odgers, at Ullett Road Church, Liverpool, as successor to Rev. G. J. Slipper, who has gone to Newry. There was a large congregation. Rev. D. J. Williams having led in prayer, the Rev. Joseph Worthington preached from Philippians ii., 5, "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Rev. J. J. Magill then expounded the principles of the Presbyterian Church government.

The Rev. Matthew Watkins said he was glad to be numbered amongst the men who were called upon to minister to a Free Church. Although new circumstances and new people called for new ways and new understandings, yet the deep needs of the religious life were much the same everywhere. Whatever should be lacking in his ministry, he hoped and prayed that there would not be a lack of true religious feeling. He trusted that he and the congregation would both be charitable in the good old English way, and that they would have a strong desire to help each other. He felt that the burden he was taking upon himself would be too heavy to bear unless he had their co-operation in the work, so that he would be able to carry out the noble traditions of that old church.

The charge to the minister was delivered by Rev. J. Collins Odgers, who said, after having Mr. Watkins as his assistant for two years in Liverpool, he was glad to see him surrounded by so many friends, who were to help to share his joys in his new sphere of labour. During his two years' ministry in Liverpool Mr. Watkins had proved himself steadfast and diligent, and was a man who knew something of the ways of the world. He (the speaker) was therefore confident that he would perform his duties in connection with the Moneyrea congregation to the satisfaction of all concerned. The Rev. Mr. Odgers concluded by giving the newly-ordained minister some practical advice as to the carrying out of his various duties.

Rev. Principal Gordon, who delivered the charge to the congregation, said they had often been told to bring their religion into their business, but he wanted to reverse that saying and bring their business into their religion, and he wanted them to open their hearts as well as their ears to their new minister, as they had done to the Revs. Fletcher Blakely, David Thompson, and Richard Lyttle, so that the future of their church would be even more glorious than the past had been.

The ordination prayer was conducted by the Rev. J. H. Bibby, and, the Lord's Prayer having been led by Rev. William Weatherall, the service was brought to a close by the pronouncing of the benediction by the Rev. Matthew Watkins.

THE LUNCHEON.

Subsequently the congregation entertained the newly-ordained minister, the members of the Bangor Presbytery, and a number of guests, both clerical and lay, to a luncheon, which was served in the schoolroom adjoining the church, which was presided over by Rev. Principal Gordon. Grace was said by the Rev. Michael Dunbar, and, after an excellent repast had been partaken of, Rev. Principal Gordon proposed the health of the King.

The toast was loyally honoured.

Rev. M. T. Dunbar, in proposing the toast of "The Lord Lieutenant and Prosperity to Ireland," said he believed that he was one of the most popular Lord Lieutenants that they ever had. They were all aware of the noble work which was being accomplished by the Countess of Aberdeen in endeavouring to diminish the great scourge of consumption which was sweeping over the land. In conclusion, he was very glad to say that Ireland continued to prosper.

In proposing the toast of "The Newly-ordained Minister," Rev. J. A. Kelly said it was with sincere pleasure he rose to propose that sentiment, which, in his opinion, was the most important one of the afternoon. As Clerk of the Presbytery into which Mr. Watkins had entered that day, he on behalf of that Presbytery gave Mr. Watkins a most hearty welcome. The big attendance on that occasion was ample proof of the high place which the newly-ordained minister already occupied in the hearts of the people of Moneyrea. Mr. Watkins had come to them not as a student from college, but as an experienced man, and he hoped he would ably follow the worthy footsteps of the Rev. Fletcher Blakely.

Rev. Matthew Watkins in responding thanked them for their hearty welcome on that occasion, and he hoped that their mark of approval and sympathy was not something which would be fleeting, but would remain for years. He hoped they would lead each other, and that they would not have to resort to the driving process. In taking up the work of the great men who had gone before him he was fully aware of the fact that he was taking upon himself a very big responsibility; but he was sure he would have their earnest support in all his undertakings. He was glad to see such a representative attendance, and he was especially pleased to see the Rev. Mr. M'Lernon, of Ballygowan, whom he hoped to

meet often in the course of his duties. In conclusion, Mr. Watkins said he was deeply grateful to them for the cordial manner in which the sentiment of his health and prosperity had been received.

In proposing the toast of "Our Visitors," the Rev. Thomas Munn said he was glad to be present on that occasion to take part in the proceedings, which, by their enthusiasm, indicated that the traditions of the past would be in safe keeping in the hands of Mr. Watkins. He had known their new minister for the past two years to be a very upright and honest man, and he thought the Moneyrea congregation had accomplished a good stroke of business in calling him to preside over them.

Mr. Sydney Jones said he would like, on behalf of the visitors, to thank the people of Moneyrea for the hospitable way in which they had received them. The splendid gathering at that meeting at a time when every hour was precious in the harvest field showed that the people of Moneyrea knew their duty to the Church and minister. Those who were visitors to County Down would be able to go to their respective homes and say that their friend Mr. Watkins was settled down in a most delightful place, and was surrounded by loyal people.

Mr. Lawrence Holt said as one who had seen Ireland for the first time he would like to say that in his opinion County Down was a land of great promise. When he looked around him, and saw the whole countryside closely and well cultivated, he could not do otherwise than think that the people of that district had a prosperous time in front of them. He had come from Liverpool to testify to the personal worth and good fellowship of their new minister and his late minister, but still good friend, Mr. Watkins. The people of Liverpool would watch with the greatest interest the doings of their newly-ordained minister, and hoped the people of Moneyrea would enjoy much happiness under the ministry of Mr. Watkins, who, he knew, would receive every assistance from them.

Short speeches were also delivered by the Rev. J. M'Lernon (Ballygowan), Rev. J. Collins Odgers (Liverpool), Rev. David Jenkins Evans (Chester), and Rev. Charles Peach, while the remaining toasts were "The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland," proposed by the Rev. Joseph Worthington, and replied to by Rev. H. J. Rossington; "Moneyrea Congregation," proposed by Rev. J. J. Magill, and responded to by Messrs. A. Kennedy Stewart and Alexander Spence.

In the evening a very enjoyable social meeting was held, at which the congregation gave the newly-ordained minister a most loyal welcome to his new charge.

We must not pretend to see all that we see, if we would be easie.—
William Penn.

BELFAST, YORK ST.:—ORDINATION.

ON 15th ult. the Presbytery of Antrim ordained Mr. John Dare Davies, a student of the Home Missionary College, Manchester, as successor to the Rev. Alex. O. Ashworth, in the York Street Church. The Ordination Service began at 12 noon when the following clergymen attended:—Revs. Alex. O. Ashworth, J. H. Bibby, M. S. Dunbar, M.A., D. J. Evans (Chester), Principal Gordon, M.A., James Kennedy, J. A. Kelly, R. M. King, T. Munn, J. A. Miskimmin, B.A., W. G. Marsden, J. J. Magill, B.A., W. Napier, J. M'Cleery, G. L. Phelps, H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., W. S. Smith, A. Turner, E. A. Voysey, M.A., W. Weatherall, J. Worthington, B.A., D. J. Williams. There was a good congregation. The music was excellent. The religious service was conducted by Rev. G. L. Phelps, who preached from ii. Cor. iv., 1-2, and during his sermon he said, *inter alia*: "A religion based on the authority of the letter, that is, on any written or spoken word was a ministration of death because of the inevitable tendency of such a religion to become a mere tradition, to lose its vitality and to breed corruption and spread death. Christianity is a spirit of life, not a law or a creed, its essence is not in forms of thought and unalterable commands but in the awakened conscience. The Christian teacher must remember he is living in the 20th century with 20th century problems, doubts and fears to face and overcome. We are called upon to sign no creed, we are in bondage to no dead letter, we are free to speak and in duty bound to speak, only that *we* do know. May we never be tempted to speak the popular word rather than the word of truth—never walk in craftiness, twisting ancient sayings to please those who fear to go forward, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Rev. R. M. King gave an exposition of Presbyterian Church order and put the usual questions to the candidate, and the candidate then made a statement of his principles and objects in devoting himself to the Christian ministry, in which he said:—"My faith rests upon the precepts of the New Testament, in which I find there is one God, the Father of all of us. There is one Lord Jesus Christ, who is our guide and our Ideal in life, through whose teaching and life we get a clear view of God's character and man's relation to Him. Jesus is the way to God. To all his faithful disciples and to all God's true and sincere children the Heavenly Father gives His Holy Spirit to bless the soul with everlasting peace. My preaching will be based on the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. I shall not outrage the hallowed freedom of this pulpit by giving vent to my own petty opinions. The living example of Jesus is the pattern set before me. I hope to be a friend of every

member of this congregation. I trust they will feel I am here to aid them. I want them to feel I am one of themselves, ready to enter their experiences, to brave the storms and to enjoy the sunshine of life with them. No matter what the difficulty or the trouble is, may they always remember that I am ready to do my duty. My door will be open, and they will be very welcome. May God give me strength, humility, wisdom and patience. I will do my best."

Rev. R. M. King then asked if the congregation adhered to the call and the answer being in the affirmative, Rev. J. Kennedy offered the ordination prayer, the clergy present placing their hands on the candidate's head, he reverently kneeling. The right hand of fellowship was then given by the ministers present, after which Rev. Principal Gordon, of the College, Manchester, gave in eloquent and earnest speech the charge to the minister and congregation. The service concluded with Hymn, after which the benediction was pronounced by Rev. Alex. O. Ashworth.

Some 35 ministers and friends adjourned to the Prince of Wales Hotel where an excellent luncheon was much enjoyed. After the usual loyal toasts had been given, Rev. Principal Gordon proposed "The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland," to which Rev. Wm. Napier (Moderator) and Rev. J. J. Magill, B.A., responded. This was followed by the toast of "The Presbytery of Antrim," offered by Rev. J. A. Kelly, and responded to by Rev. Alex. O. Ashworth," "The health of the new minister, Rev. John D. Davies," by Rev. D. J. Williams, "The York Street Congregation" and the "Presbyteries of Armagh, Bangor and Templepatrick, the visitors and the new-comers."

In the evening an exceedingly enjoyable Soiree was held in York Street Lecture Hall, under the Presidency of Rev. J. D. Davies. The music consisting of Piano Solo, by Miss Ashworth, and songs by Miss M. Barnes (Greyabbey), Messrs. Chas. M'Anally and J. Conkey and the chairman, was of a very superior order. Short addresses were delivered by Revs. Principal Gordon, H. J. Rossington, G. L. Phelps, J. Worthington, J. A. Kelly, R. M. King, Alex. O. Ashworth, the Chairman, and Mr. James Neill, in which the humorous alternated with the serious.

SUNDAY MORNING SOLILOQUIES OF HEZEKIAH GOODENOUGH.

Recorded by Rev. W. S. Smith.

THE GOSPEL OF DESPAIR.

THEY tell me I'm to go to eternal torment, and remain there for ever and ever, if—, if—! O dear, but this is terrible. That I, poor, plodding, anxious, oft-times wearied Hezekiah Goodenough, should be threatened with this awful calamity, is enough to drive one mad—has driven thousands mad. I have tried to fight the wild beasts of life manfully, and to be knocked down after all by the devil and pitched headlong into his big roaring pit, is not, to speak with becoming restraint, respectable treatment. To threaten people, even by the roadside as that old minister, the Rev. Thomas Hardheart, frequently did, was abominable. "You're going straight to hell!" he would bawl out to a member of his congregation. He deserved a cat-o-nine tails made of hot wires laid about his bare back, just as a slight fore-taste of that "wrath to come," to which he so recklessly condemned others.

People are taught to imbibe this doctrine of eternal punishment almost with the dawn of reason. The teachers, as J. R. Lowell says—

"— make religion be abhorred
Who round with darkness gulf her,
And think no word can please the Lord
Unless it smells of sulphur."

in testimony whereof, let me see what the Westminster Assembly's Catechism, that theological milk for babes, says, Yes, here are the words I want :—"The punishments of sin in the world to come, are, everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous torments in soul and body without intermission, in hell fire, for ever." Could anybody deserve such a fate? And a reverend divine named Ambrose, adds—"The damned shall be packed like bricks in a kiln, and be so bound that they cannot move a limb, not even an eyelid; and while thus fixed, the Almighty shall blow the fires of hell through them for ever." This gentleman is worthy to stand beside the Rev. Thomas Hardheart, and deserves tickling with the cat-o-nine-tails just as he did.

If I sat on the seat of power and authority in this great universe, I would not act as God is said to act. I would not punish remorselessly, unmercifully, and eternally, the erring and unfortunate. No, I would show a little mercy, nay, I would endeavour to deal justly. I would punish with no greater severity than the case required. This is what the wise, humane parent does in connection with the discipline of his children and also the just judge. The epitaph on Martin Elginbrod, expresses, I am sure, the sentiments of tens of thousands on this subject.

"Here lies poor Martin Elginbrod,
Have mercy on his soul, Oh, God!
He would on you, if he were God,
And you were Martin Elginbrod."

But the character of God, as pourtrayed by Christ, is very different from that pourtrayed by the creeds. The creeds make him appear revengeful, implacable, anything but "comfortable," a dreadful taskmaster, in comparison with whom a brutal slave-driver is an angel. Jesus Christ pourtrayed him as a "perfect" being, a merciful, long-suffering Heavenly Father. He inculcated no such feelings as those inspired by the creeds. He had the fullest confidence in the moral govern-

ment and providence of God, and inculcated such in his disciples. There was no fear, no dread in Jesus, because he was ever looking up trustingly, not to an avenging Deity, but to a God of Love. In him love cast out all fear, if fear ever haunted his soul. This doctrine of hell fire is opposed to reason, to the attributes of God, and to Scripture, I believe, when properly interpreted. And is it possible that parents can glance around the family hearth and still believe in this awful sickening doctrine ? Can they behold prospective denizens of hell in the dear ones they have nursed and reared ? There is my Johnnie with blooming face and generous heart, the picture of health and happiness. How my soul goes out towards him ! Frank and unsuspecting, he is beloved by all who know him. And then there is Maggie—quiet, thoughtful, sedate, obliging, affectionate, true as truth, sure as the sun. She is the mainstay of the household when Jane and I are tired out. And there is Dick, wild as a March hare, boisterous as the neighbouring brook, full of fun and innocence, running his head against this post or that wall, and thinking the world is very hard upon him. And then there is that poor lingering sick one. Ah me ! My heart bleeds for her. We watch her day and night. The pain is terrible at times. The hours are dreary and long. She is weary, weary, and sometimes says she wants to go home, to enjoy " the sweet rest of heaven." Yes, the sweet rest of heaven ! What blissful innocence ! What confidence ! I never tortured her with the thought of hell fire, thank God ; and if she ever had any fear, it has been cast out by love. Are all these beloved ones, over whom my heart yearns, these that are hale and strong, and this pale shrunken, patient, hopeful one, to swell the numbers already said to be writhing and moaning in the burning pit ? God forbid ! The very thought is sickening. Surely, if there is any such thing as heresy, this doctrine is the most damnable of all. To heap opprobrium upon the great name of the Almighty, to defame the character of the everloving one, is heresy indeed ! Perish the creeds that teach it, say I, but let eternal truth, justice, and love remain.

I must regard everlasting punishment as unreasonable, unjust, and unscriptural ; I must regard it as impossible. Vengeance, away with it ! Eternal hatred, depart ! Hell-fire, begone ! It is not required in the divine government.

It is correction, purification, chastening that the wicked will require. An everlasting hell affords no scope for improvement, for hope, and is opposed to the purpose of punishment, which is remedial. It is evil, evil absolutely, evil for ever. The creeds have inculcated this grim dogma until familiarity has bred contempt for it, and people speak of hell with a complacency that is most astonishing. Only the other day I heard Betty Johnson coolly informing an acquaintance that her friend Thomas was dead, " been dead a month," she said, " but whether he's in heaven, or hell, I'm sure I can't tell you." I hear the merry laugh, the innocent song ; I witness hearty rejoicing ; I behold happy faces indicative of happy hearts, I see people look upon the face of nature and appear the happier for having done so. Is all this compatible with a sincere belief in endless punishment in hell ? Surely not. Did men really believe this Gospel of despair, this earth would verily be " a vale of tears," a pandemonium. Life would be filled with sighing and moaning. This world would be but the outer court of hell itself. Every wedding would be an event which should make angels weep, every birth an event at which the devil and his legions could rejoice.

This Gospel of Despair is a dreadful, a fearful gospel. It is a curse now, and will be a curse for ever. It can do man no good, only harm. It robs life of its true glory, drapes the universe in gloom, and renders the thought of annihilation an untold blessing.

Yes, that is not a bad idea that has just entered my poor, old, throbbing pate. I am a sworn enemy of hell, and so I will do all I can in my humble way to destroy it. Parliament is, or should be, a wise and powerful body. Some of its members in 1649 had something to do in the setting up of hell, and kindling the big fire there. I will, yes, I will, petition Parliament to bring in a bill to abolish it forthwith. If I can only succeed, won't it be a blessing ? I should get rid of the greatest curse known. That wouldn't be a small thing for Hezekiah Goodenough to accomplish. He would then be able to lie down in peace, and dream that he dwelt in marble halls.

REPORTS.

Ballee.—Ballee Sunday and Day Schools, through the liberality of the manager, Rev. J. H. Bibby, enjoyed their annual fete on Thursday, 25th August. Owing to the pluvial inclemency of the weather, it was deemed advisable not to incur the risk attendant on a long drive, but to hold the sports in the school grounds. The selection proved a happy one, as rain fell almost incessantly during the evening, and, consequently, all felt pleased that the drive had been abandoned. At two o'clock the children, to the number of 70, were served with a substantial repast. The rain falling heavily prevented an outdoor programme of sports being carried through. An indoor series of games was improvised, which proved a very good substitute for the discarded arrangements. Tea, with its usual accompaniments, was served at five o'clock, after which amusements were resumed, and carried on with hilarity until the hour for home-going came round. Each child being handed a well filled bag of confectionery, a short address was given by Rev. J. H. Bibby, inculcating the necessity of punctuality, regularity of attend-

ance, and attention to work. After cheers for their entertainer, teachers, etc., the gathering dispersed. All the functions of serving, tea-making, etc., were carried out by the children themselves, the senior girls presiding at the tea-tables and the senior boys making capable stewards.

Ballyclare.—A congregational meeting was held in the Church on the 4th ult. to consider the resignation of the esteemed pastor, Rev. W. Fielding. The general tone of the meeting was one of heart-felt sorrow and regret, and it was unanimously agreed to ask Mr. Fielding to reconsider his resignation and withdraw it. A deputation was, therefore, appointed to interview Mr. Fielding and convey to him the decision of the meeting. Their errand, however, proved futile, and to their regret they learned that Mr. Fielding had finally decided to sever his connection with the Old Presbyterian Church in Ballyclare. Mr. Fielding has laboured for twenty-six years in this Church and as it now stands it is a lasting memorial to his splendid energy and ability. When Mr. Fielding came to Ballyclare the Church buildings were in a very dilapidated condition. At the present time there is a very handsome Church, an entirely new house built on the Church property, and with the generosity that has always been part of his noble nature he presented to the Church (at its restoration) a beautiful pipe organ. In all his work he has been ably assisted by Mrs. Fielding, whose hospitality and kind helpfulness is proverbial, and whose loss will be felt no less keenly than that of Mr. Fielding. Mr. Fielding's place will be hard to fill and it is with the sincerest sorrow his congregation are obliged to part with him. He intends taking a well-deserved rest, and both he and his worthy help-meet carry with them the very best wishes of the people among whom he has laboured so faithfully.

Killinchy : The late Miss Florence Bailie.—With much regret we record the passing away into the higher life of Miss Florence Bailie, Ballyministra, Killinchy, after a protracted illness, borne with much patience and resignation. Miss Bailie came of a family ancient in the annals of Killinchy, and connected with the Remonstrant congregation ever since the beginning. While health and strength lasted she was a constant attendant at her place of worship. In her personal demeanour and conversation she habitually showed forth the power and charm of the religion she professed. In spite of the infirmities of the flesh she maintained a cheerful courage to the last, and was a pattern of the Christian faith and fortitude which our religion inculcates, but which are too seldom witnessed when weakness and pain gain the mastery. We shall miss her bright cheery, sunny nature, now that she has been withdrawn; but, at the same time, recognise that "what is, is best." We feel that she has gone to a more genial country "where there shall be neither pain nor sorrow any more," and that she deserves the rest she has gained. The members of the Church and neighbours generally feel much sympathy for her brother, sisters and neice, who ministered to her throughout her long illness. The sympathy of the neighbourhood is intensified by the fact that illness and death have been frequent visitors at this home in recent years. The hand of death has indeed been heavy on them. Miss Bailie passed away in the 56th year of her age, and her remains were interred in the family burying-ground, Killinchy New Meeting House Green, on Friday, July 22.

Larne and Kilwaughter.—On Friday, 2nd ult., the now Annual Conversazione, Sale of Work, Organ Recital, &c., &c., was held in the Schoolroom, Grounds and Church. The weather, very unpropitious in the early part of the day, became and continued beautifully fine through the afternoon and evening, so that a very large company assembled, hardly a family in connection with the congregation being unrepresented, to say nothing of numbers from other congregations of all denominations in the town and neighbourhood who joined us. At 3 o'clock, Rev. J. Kennedy introduced Mrs. Thompson, *nee* Patterson, of Cairncastle, who, in a few well-chosen sentences initiated the proceedings. Mr. Sam Magill welcoming and thanking her on behalf of the congregation. Soon business transactions were in speedy progress in the Schoolroom, while in the surrounding grounds members promenaded or reposed on benches imbibing "the cup that cheers" and listening to the pleasing strains of the Larne String Band. When the sun hid his benignant countenance in the shadows of the West few regretted his withdrawal in the brilliance of the illumination afforded by incandescent gas jets and Japanese lanterns judiciously arranged, and inviting as they did to "tripping it on the light fantastic" to the charming music of the Band till nearly 11 o'clock, when a most delightful re-union came to a close. At 8 o'clock p.m., an Organ Recital was given in the Church by Mr. Edward Holmes, organist, the vocal soloists being Mr. Waugh, tenor, of Belfast, and Miss Dorothy Haywood, of London, soprano, daughter of Mr. Earnest Haywood, who will long be remembered not only as an organist and teacher of music, but especially for the *impetus* he gave to the study of music in Larne and neighbourhood. Mr. Waugh, unfortunately, was suffering from a cold, but he rendered the items selected by him, viz., "Ye people rend your hearts," "If with all your hearts" and "Then shall the righteous shine forth" (Elijah) with a fervour and correctness of *technique* which reminded many in the large audience of his magnificent singing here on a former occasion. Miss Haywood, still in her teens, simple and unaffected, won all hearts by her magnificent renderings of "Pleading" (Elgar) and "Verborgenheit" (Wolff). It may be said that vocal compositions of such magnitude and beauty are only heard to full advantage when accompanied by

a full orchestra. Only a modified version of the accompaniments of these works is possible on the organ. Nevertheless, both singer and accompanist proved themselves true artists and capable musicians. The organist in adapting the accompaniments to the resources of his instrument, and the soloist in interpreting both numbers so exquisitely. Miss Haywood is the fortunate possessor of a rich and powerful voice of most pleasing quality, and her singing displayed wonderful resources both of *technique* and expressiveness from the softest pianissimo to the loudest *forte*. The perfect control of her voice was strikingly noticeable. Mr. Holmes is to be congratulated, and by persons of musical tastes he will be thanked for providing so rich a musical treat at so short a notice, and especially that "greatly daring" he produced compositions in Instrumental Solos, Vocal Solos and accompaniments ranging from wild passion to gentle whispering pleading, which not only satisfied the severely critical, but also gratified others whose musical education is of the slenderest character.

Unity Gui'd.—The last Excursion of the season took place on Saturday, September 3rd, the destination being Raloo, as it had been found impracticable to carry out the original idea of visiting Castlewellan. Although the Midland Station presented a most animated appearance on this particular day, it was unfortunately not owing to the strength of numbers of our party. Alighting at Glynn Station we commenced our walk to the outpost of our Faith which was our goal. A steady ascent of some 3 miles brought us to Gleno, where we turned aside to admire the pretty waterfall which, after the heavy rains, was in full force. The fresh mountain air had so whetted the appetite of at least one individual that a stray bread-cart was waylaid and a purchase affected. After this little diversion the ascent was continued and eventually our destination hove in sight, much to the relief of a majority of the party. A warm welcome awaited us at the neat little Church from Rev. John M'Cleery and some of his congregation (more would have been present had the welcome change in the weather not called forth all energies to the salvation of the crops), and we were soon busily engaged in discussing a welcome meal. This important business concluded an interchange of courtesies took place, and after lingering a while to admire the splendid sweep of country the return journey was commenced in the gathering dusk. Members are reminded that the Winter Session opens on Wednesday, October 19th, in Central Hall, when the evening will be devoted to "Holiday Papers" with lime-light illustrations.

ECHOES.

By the demise of Miss Nightingale, all classes experience a sense of personal loss. Many questions have been asked as to what denomination she belonged to. An Episcopalian clergyman when asked, replied, "To the sect unfortunately rare—that of the Good Samaritans." That statement was characteristic of Miss Nightingale's "works," but what of her faith? Ecclesiastically, she seems to have been in sympathy with the Church of England; but theologically, she was apparently a Unitarian. If we were to judge her by her descent, she should have been endowed with "a double dose" of Unitarianism. Her father, and his father, were Unitarians, while her maternal grandfather, William Smith, M.P. for Norwich for many years, gloried in his Unitarianism, and was instrumental in bringing about in England, the repeal of the cruel Trinity Act, in 1813, followed by its repeal in Ireland, in 1817. When the profession of Unitarianism was illegal, he declared in Parliament that he was a Unitarian. But though Miss Nightingale was not in communication with us as a denomination, she wrote an article many years ago, in a popular monthly magazine, which embodied Unitarian sentiments expressed in very vigorous language. She was especially strong in her denunciation of everlasting punishment, after which it is difficult to understand how she could become identified, even ecclesiastically, with Church-of-Englandism. This doctrine was compared with the conduct of a notorious French baby-farmer, much talked of when the article was written, who murdered little children by dropping vitriol into their mouths, and dipping their heads in boiling water, which conduct, she declared, was merciful compared with that ascribed to God! Yet she was, according to Testamentary instructions I believe, buried by those who, when reciting the Athanasian Creed in their Church services, consigned her to Eternal Torment! Evidently, theological consistency was not a strong feature in the character of Miss Nightingale.

* * *

The Papacy is setting itself most doggedly against all modern ideas of progress, and so the Spanish Government is especially obnoxious to it, because it is becoming responsive somewhat, to the spirit of the age. The leaders of the movement are charged with desiring to upset the present order of things, both socially and religiously, and so the Pope, having got the loan of Mrs. Partington's wonderful mop, is brandishing it in the face of the rising tide of modern thought. We shall see what will be the result. Spain, at all events, in awakening from the slumber of ages!—W.S.S.

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